

IN THE UNITED STATES PATENT AND TRADEMARK OFFICE

Patent Application

Inventor(s) P. M. Cox et al.

Case 41698.1034

Serial No.

Examiner

TBA

Filing Date

Group Art Unit

Title Method and Apparatus for Monitoring Telephonic Members and Providing
Directory Assistance

**PRELIMINARY AMENDMENT
AND INFORMATION DISCLOSURE STATEMENT**

I hereby certify that this paper is being deposited with the United States Postal Service as first class mail in an envelope addressed to: Commissioner of Patents and Trademarks, Washington, D.C. 20231, on October 24, 2001.

Alex L. Yip
Attorney Name

34,759
Registration No.

Signature

October 24, 2001
Date of Signature

**THE COMMISSIONER OF PATENTS AND TRADEMARKS
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20231**

Sir:

Applicants submit herewith an Information Disclosure Statement in the above-identified patent application. In addition, applicants hereby preliminarily amend the application before its examination on the merits as follows:

IN THE SPECIFICATION

Before the "BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION" on page 1, **insert** the following paragraph:

This application is a continuation of application Serial No. 08/816,921, filed on March 13, 1997.

IN THE CLAIMS

Cancel claims 1-56.

Add claims 57-77 as follows:

57. A method for managing a call from a caller to an information assistance service, the method comprising:
- receiving information concerning a first calling area associated with the call;
 - eliciting from the caller an information assistance request;
 - searching a database for results responsive to the information assistance request, the results including a destination telephone number;
 - determining whether a connection from the first calling area to a second calling area indicated by the destination telephone number incurs charges;
 - determining whether the caller is authorized to have the connection made through the information assistance service based on a status of an account associated with the caller; and
 - making the connection when it is determined that the caller is authorized to have the connection made which incurs charges.

58. The method of claim 57 wherein the first calling area is different from the second calling area.

59. The method of claim 58 wherein the connection includes a long distance connection.

60. The method of claim 57 wherein the information assistance service is provided by an operator.

61. The method of claim 57 wherein the charges are charged to the account.

62. A method for managing a call from a caller to an information assistance service, the method comprising:

receiving information concerning a calling telephone number associated with the call;

eliciting from the caller an information assistance request;

in response to the information assistance request searching a database for a destination telephone number;

determining whether a connection between a calling station from which the call originates to a called station associated with the destination telephone number incurs charges based on a comparison of at least a portion of the calling telephone number with at least a portion of the destination telephone number;

determining whether the caller is authorized to have the connection made through the information assistance service based on a status of an account associated with the caller; and

connecting a calling station to the called station when it is determined that the caller is authorized to have the connection made which incurs charges.

63. The method of claim 62 wherein the information includes an automatic numbering identification (ANI).

64. The method of claim 62 wherein the portion of the calling telephone number indicates a first calling area, and the portion of the destination telephone number indicates a second calling area different from the first calling area.

65. The method of claim 64 wherein the connection includes a long distance connection.

66. The method of claim 62 wherein the information assistance service is provided by an operator.

67. The method of claim 62 wherein the charges are charged to the account.

68. A method of providing an information assistance service to a customer, comprising:

receiving signals in setting up a call from the customer through an inbound channel;

based on the received signals, identifying a calling telephone number associated with a calling station from which the customer calls;

eliciting an information assistance request from the customer;

in response to the information assistance request, searching a database for a destination telephone number;

comparing a first calling area indicated by the calling telephone number with a second calling area indicated by the destination telephone number;

determining whether the customer is authorized to be connected to the destination telephone number based on at least a result of the comparison;

allocating an outbound channel to establish a connection to the destination

telephone number when it is determined that the customer is authorized to be connected to the destination telephone number;

dialing the destination telephone number over the outbound channel; and
connecting the inbound channel to the outbound channel.

69. The method claim 68 wherein the received signals contain information concerning an ANI.

70. The method of claim 68 wherein whether the customer is authorized to be connected to the destination telephone number is determined also based on a status of an account associated with the caller when the first calling area is different from the second calling area.

71. The method of claim 70 wherein charges incurred by the connection are charged to the account.

72. The method of claim 68 wherein the information assistance service is provided by an operator.

73. A system for managing a call from a caller to an information assistance service, the system comprising:

an interface for receiving information concerning a first calling area associated with the call, an information assistance request being elicited from the caller;

a database for looking up results responsive to the information assistance request, the results including a destination telephone number;

a processor for determining whether a connection from the first calling area to a

second calling area indicated by the destination telephone number incurs charges;

a controller for determining whether the caller is authorized to have the connection made through the information assistance service based on a status of an account associated with the caller; and

a switching device for making the connection when it is determined that the caller is authorized to have the connection made which incurs charges.

74. The system of claim 73 wherein the first calling area is different from the second calling area.

75. The system of claim 74 wherein the connection includes a long distance connection.

76. The system of claim 73 wherein the information assistance service is provided by an operator.

77. The system of claim 73 wherein the charges are charged to the account.

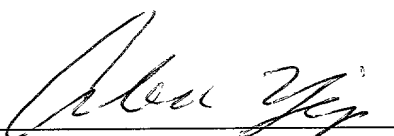
Remarks

The present application is a continuation of application Serial No. 08/816,921, filed on March 13, 1997. The specification has been amended to reflect such a priority claim. Accordingly, a Version with Markings to Show Changes Made on page 1 of the specification is enclosed.

Applicants have cancelled claims 1-56. Claims 57-77 have been added which are drawn to various aspects of the invention. Support for these claims may be found, for example, at page 20, line 14 et seq. of the specification.

In addition, applicants bring to the Examiner's attention the references listed on the attached Form PTO-1449 (2 sheets). Pursuant to 37 C.F.R. 1.98(d), copies of these references are not enclosed as they were previously cited by or transmitted to the U.S. Patent and Trademark Office in the parent application identified above. It is respectfully requested that the listed references be made of record in the present application.

Respectfully,

By 
Alex L. Yip
Attorney for Applicants
Reg. No. 34,759
212-836-7363

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Enclosures

METHOD AND APPARATUS FOR MONITORING TELEPHONIC MEMBERS
AND PROVIDING DIRECTORY ASSISTANCE

Patrick M. Cox
A. Peter Powell
Paul W. Filliger
Michael A. Kepler
Christopher A. Huey

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*This application is a continuation of application Serial
No. 08/816,921, filed on March 13, 1997.*

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

Technical Field

10 The present invention relates to a system for providing
directory assistance services to telephone users in a
telephone network and, in particular, maintaining a
connection to a directory assistance platform and providing
for automatic reconnection to a directory assistance
15 provider.

Discussion of the Related Art

Telephone calls from one party to another are made
through telephone networks, with telephone switches and
20 private branch exchanges ("PBX") employed as necessary in
order to connect networks and customers. Customers
frequently make use of directory assistance systems to reach
their desired parties. When using a directory assistance
system (sometimes referred to as a "directory assistance
25 platform"), a caller first dials the appropriate telephone
number or access code. Telephone users usually access a
directory assistance system through a carrier switching
center. Once connected to a directory assistance provider,
such as a live operator or a voice server, the caller
30 identifies the party whose telephone number is desired. The
correct number is located and may be reported to (by voice or
computer-generated speech), and/or dialed for, the caller.
It is increasingly common for directory assistance systems to
connect the caller to the caller's desired number in addition
35 to, or in place of, simply providing the number to the
caller. This is particularly helpful to callers using
cellular or other forms of wireless telephones, who may be